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THE MEANING OF EVOLUTION IN ETHICS.*

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A COMPLETE discussion of the problem of evolution so far as ethics is concerned should involve answers to four questions:

I. What is evolution?

II. Has morality evolved?

III. How has it evolved?

IV. What light does the idea of its evolution throw upon its standards?

I. The first of these questions I am going to pass by as too large for adequate discussion here. I will only suggest that the idea of evolution, if it is to mean anything, must include three points: (1) change, (2) identity through change, (3) progress. Changelessness is not evolution, but neither is mere change. There must be a certain continuity or unity in the change; the successive aspects must be held together so as to constitute a process and not a mere succession. The fall of forest leaves is change, but it is not evolution, for there is no continuity in the succeeding leaves. And, finally, progress is involved, however difficult it may be to define this debated term. A mere marking time, a circular motion,

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is not evolution. Evolution is dramatic, involving beginning, middle and end. It is the becoming of that which was not, or of that which was to be. This progress may be for the better or the worse, measured by certain standards, but progress there must be if evolution is to have meaning.

II. The second question is a double one. It may mean, has morality evolved from the non-moral? or, has morality evolved within its own sphere? I shall discuss both these briefly.

1. Has morality evolved from the non-moral?

A clear idea of the nature of morality is a necessary prerequisite to a discussion of the problem of its origin. What is, then, the essential difference between moral and non-moral action? The question here concerns, not the distinction between good and bad conduct, but that between conduct upon which we do pass moral judgment and that upon which we do not. It is the difference between the action of a being with a conscience and the action of one who has none.

This distinction is one difficult to make in a way satisfactory to all thinkers; but I am myself fairly well satisfied with the definition of moral conduct as that in which the particular action is judged good or bad by the agent with reference to an objective standard. To have a moral consciousness or faculty is thus to estimate the value of conduct in terms of its relation to the good. Our action may not be in the line of our decision as to what is good, but if the estimate is made we have a conscience. The moral man is one whose conduct is thus controlled by his idea of the good; the immoral man is he who has the idea but disregards it. This means that the conscience is the application of reason to life—practical reason, as Kant called it—the interpretation of life in terms of universal law. The case is quite analogous to that of theoretical truth. We have theoretical truth only when our particular judgment has been referred to an objective order of fact and by this confirmed. We have moral

truth only when our particular desires and impulses are similarly referred to an objective order of worth and found good. Without this possibility of reference to an objective standard we can have neither science nor morality. Unless we can say not only, "I want this," but, "This *is* good," we are not moral beings. The reflective judgment is necessary.

Our problem then is, how do we come to judge our conduct in this objective fashion? How does it come about that we not merely have certain desires, but ask in regard to them whether we *ought* to have such desires? Whence comes this objective standard which seems to claim authority to control our lives? Is it a special and unanalyzable faculty, or is it a product of evolution?

And here, again, we have a problem of meaning. What do we mean by the question as to whether conscience has evolved or not? In a large majority of cases those who ask the question have not the faintest idea of what their question does mean. I certainly am not at all sure of their meaning. But, perhaps, they *might* mean to ask, if they *did* mean anything, whether conscience is different in kind from the non-moral consciousness or only different in complexity; whether it is *other than* animal consciousness or only more of the same kind; whether man is only a bigger brute or of a different class; or, to put it in slightly different terms, whether moral action is completely explicable in terms of animal action, or contains a new element not previously found. To say that conscience has evolved may mean that its nature is to be adequately stated in terms of that which preceded it.

If the evolution of conscience means this, I am quite prepared to deny that it has evolved. There is more truth in the theory of special creation than in this. I know that this whole matter of difference of kind is a difficult subject, but I maintain that more confusion of thought is likely to arise from the identification of moral and animal action than from their distinction. The conduct of Socrates choosing to die rather than to violate

the laws of his state is not the action of a sheep blindly following its fellows through a gap in the fence; it is rather the action of a man deliberately refusing to follow his fellows through the doors of his prison. And the explanation of his conduct is to be found, not in the imitative instinct, nor even in a prudent calculation of his future pleasures or pains, but in his recognition of the absolute value of a certain type of life.

But the evolution of conscience may mean that, although it is different in quality from its predecessors, it has yet developed away from them by a series of slight changes, the law of which we can give. Its evolution is here a certain continuity of differences, the conditions of which we can approximately determine. It would mean that while at the two ends of the scale we can recognize absolute differences in kind, these extremes are united by an infinite series of intermediate qualities between which it is practically impossible to distinguish. But because darkness passes through twilight into day by imperceptible degrees we do not deny the difference in quality between darkness and light. Nor do we deny the distinctness, even though physics may say it corresponds to a purely quantitative difference in rates of motion. No more need we deny moral differences under similar conditions.

The question now becomes one of fact: can we find a graded series of types of action reaching from conscience at the top to brute action at the bottom? Can we find the missing link in morals which completes the continuity of the chain? I think we can, thanks to modern psychology, genetic and social.

The old contrast that used to be drawn was between the purely selfish beast and the highly social man. How can there be any kinship between the purely self-seeking animal and the strictly self-denying man? How can we think of the conscienceless beast subjecting himself and his desires to an objective law? How can selfishness change into its own opposite unless it is its own opposite?

The answer has been found in a denial of the facts. The purely self-seeking animal has been found to be a fiction like that of the economic man. The parental and gregarious instincts have been discovered and a certain unity found in the lower life. The beast is no longer thought of as exclusively going about seeking whom he may devour, and we are forced to find a new analogue of the devil. There seems to be law in this primitive family—law in the herd, a restraint upon indiscriminate action. And when we come to primitive man we find the same condition: the savage is not by nature an isolated individual. He is from his birth a member of a family and group, whose customs are his customs and whose laws are his laws. His whole life is lived under this social control. This is the idea of the tribal self, which Clifford has developed, or the social self, as emphasized by Baldwin and Royce. The individual's very self is a borrowed one; he thinks as the tribe thinks, feels as it feels, does as it does. In this social, gregarious, parental control we have the anticipation of moral control. The standard by which action is determined is not an individual but an objective social one. Conscience is the voice of the race.

In fact, so successful has been the attack upon the old idea of isolated, selfish individuals as the units of society, that our difficulty nowadays is just the opposite of what it was before. Instead of the problem of how selfish man came to be social we have the even more difficult one of how social man came to be selfish—how it was that he ever thought of setting up for himself and disregarding the customs of his tribe, how it was that there came to be individuals. For conscience implies both these elements, the social and the individual. Man must act for and with society, but he must do it, not in a blind, instinctive fashion, but as an individual, conscious of his own independent life, yet willing to devote it to the larger end. Morality is the *self*-devotion of individuals to the common good.

Into the psychology of self-consciousness we cannot go here. Enough that necessarily in the course of rational development the individual does come to a consciousness that he is a relatively independent center of things and can determine his life for himself. He finds that he has private interests as well as social interests, and then comes the clash and conflict out of which conscience emerges. This is the fall of man; a fall up instead of a fall down, we are taught nowadays—at any rate, a transition from blind obedience to social instinct and tradition to a conscious struggle between ideal and unworthy motives, between the private self and an objective good.

How is this transition effected? How does this self-devotion take place? Here we reach the limits of explanation, for it is a matter of the mystery of any conscious choice. Without it we have brutes, with it we have moral man.

Our missing link, then, while important, does not close the gap completely. There is still the long step from social instinct to self-conscious choice; and while we may believe that the last step is made as the earlier ones were, and that we have no need to invoke miraculous agencies, it is nevertheless true that we shall probably always find a decided break in the qualitative continuity. The moral life will feel new.

As to the factors in bringing about these changes, I think there is no doubt that natural selection is the most important. Social instincts are obviously of the highest utility for the groups possessing them, and aid survival. Self-conscious reason is equally valuable both for the individual and the tribe. And, finally, the harmony of both in moral action or conscience is imperative. Conscience survives because it is biologically valuable. As to why it *appears*, that is one of the mysteries of variation.

2. *Has morality evolved within its own sphere?*

Granted, now, the race in possession of its conscience, and we have this second meaning of the question as to

the evolution of morality within itself from lower to higher forms. And here I have space only to discuss the meaning of the question itself. Does this advance mean a development of greater conscientiousness in the performance of known duty, a stricter observance of the moral standard, a greater subjective morality? If it does I fear we can gather little evidence for such an increase of conscientiousness. The gap between the ideal and the actual shows no signs of gradual closing. In spite of Mr. Spencer's optimism the annoying distinction between what we want to do and what we ought to do remains grimly immovable, and the saint is he who feels the gap most keenly. Our growing reason has revealed to us possibilities of sin far beyond those known to our innocent ancestors, and we have not been backward in availing ourselves of these. To-day, as in the past, every man has to work out his own salvation. The moral life is not a fixed quality or structure to be handed down by inheritance or tradition, but is something to be *achieved* by each man for himself, and unless so achieved is not the moral life. We cannot expect, therefore, to find evolution in character through the gradual accumulations of righteousness. The virtues of the saints are not transferred to their descendents—we cannot stand morally on the shoulders of our parents. Indeed, the more we inherit of opportunity or ideas, the greater becomes our problem.

Nor do we find evolution in the nature or form of the moral consciousness itself. To be moral now is just what it has ever been—to be true to one's reflective ideals of life. If the savage is moral at all he is so in this way, and the best of us knows no better. The quality of will which renders *him* moral is exactly the same as that which makes us so. For all of us it is merely the choice of the better before the worse.

This evolution within morality must mean, then, the development of higher standards of conduct—the development of objective, rather than subjective goodness. It must mean a certain gradual growth in ideals as these

are applied to conduct. And here we should distinguish, as does Hobhouse, between verbal and practical ideals—between those which are looked at on Sunday and those which are for week-day use. It is only in the latter that we find a real test of development. That there has been moral evolution in this sense I shall not take time to prove. It seems to me a postulate, a presupposition, of our moral judgments. There has been change, and that this change is for the better or higher is a faith involved in our efforts after deeper moral insight. Nor shall I even attempt to suggest the direction taken by moral development, interesting as that problem is. More complicated problems demand our attention.

III. How has morality evolved?

And now for the factors in moral evolution. By what means is the advance effected? Is it the work of the same factors as in the lower grades of life, or have we new forces? Natural selection is the great factor in physical evolution. In the struggle for existence only those forms of life survive which are adapted to the conditions of the environment. Nature weeds out the unfit; and their unfitness is determined solely by their inability to exist under the given conditions. No idea of value enters here. No conscious or rational selection is made; no selection at all, in the strict sense of the term. The fit are not *selected*, it is the unfit who fail to survive, and the fit are merely the survivors. The process is negative throughout. A railroad train selects its passengers in the same sense—those who come on time get aboard, those who do not, get left.

Is this the way in which the development of moral standards takes place? Partly, at least. The elementary virtues are the forms of conduct which enable the individual and the tribe to survive. They have become fixed standards because without them man would have perished in the struggle for existence. Courage and temperance and justice found a foothold in life by the same natural selective process by which the eye and hand assumed their

present shape. They were useful. And so to-day we find a certain eliminative process going on by which the morally unfit are submerged and lost in the social and physical struggle. A man whose morals vary from type in an unfavorable direction has little chance to survive.

But while natural selection in the early stages of morality, or in the premoral stage, may have been an important factor, it has by no means the importance for ethics that it has for biology, and naturally so, when we consider the difference in the two spheres. In biology the question is as to the existence or non-existence of certain types of living beings. Shall they survive or not? The unfit cannot survive; the individuals are wiped out of existence and the fit inherit the earth. But, in ethics, we have the question of the development of ideals, and in most cases the variations in these ideals are not such as to affect the survival strength of the individual or race which holds these ideals. A lower ideal will not kill a man in civilized society—perhaps reform would progress more rapidly if it did—and hence nature has not this effective and drastic remedy to apply. Both good and bad forms of conduct flourish together, for unfitness does not mean death.

We have then to look for other factors, and instead of the *negative* process of *natural* selection we find at work the *positive* process of *rational* selection. This means (1) that instead of the selection consisting merely in the destruction of the unfit, it consists in the active choice of and caring for the fit. It means that instead of the drunkard being merely eliminated by his own inability to exist, the temperate man is chosen and encouraged and favored. It is no longer a mere struggle for existence in which the one party depends solely on its ability to meet fixed and unresponsive conditions, but a test in which the conditions favor and respond to the one who meets them. The survivor does not pull himself up unaided, he is lifted into safety.

This means (2) that this selection is a *rational* or conscious selection. The development of the ideal of universal arbitration and its approaching victory over the martial ideal is not to be explained without reference to conscious selection, to deliberate choice. It is not due to the fact that our military heroes, as unfitted to survive, have gone under in the struggle, and that their ideals have perished with them. Captain Hobson is too good a sailor to perish in this easy fashion. It is not his body that is lacking, but his ideas and ideals. He persists as vigorously as ever, but his ideas are not acceptable to the thinking people of our time. Society thinks, analyzes, weighs these ideas, and their fate is dependent upon their choice. Those judged fit are held and propagated, and those judged unfit are rejected. In this moral evolution purpose, rationality is the important factor. It is not merely that the results are *actually* useful and reasonable, but that their reasonableness is the explicit ground of their conscious selection. The utility of the eye may be the reason why it assumed its present form, but this utility was a resultant, and not the end for which nature worked. Arbitration is also useful, but it comes not merely because it has been useful but because men believe in it and work for it. Teleology may be problematic in natural evolution, but it is self-evident in moral evolution.

Mr. Huxley was one of the first of scientific men to recognize this difference between natural and rational selection, and his statement of it in his essay on "Evolution and Ethics" created much disturbance among his scientific brethren. In that essay he points out the difference between the condition of things on an open heath, where natural selection is unchecked, and in a walled garden, where the conditions are consciously adjusted by a gardener. Inside the wall all manner of beautiful and rare plants may be made to grow by intelligent direction of the gardener, plants such as would instantly perish if left unprotected on the open heath. Both within and

without the walls the plants survive because they are fit to survive; but without the walls this fitness is a matter of mere physical strength, within, it is a matter determined by the conscious purpose of the gardener. Without the walls beauty may not constitute fitness, within, by the will of the keeper, it does.

So within the moral sphere. Virtues which never would have constituted fitness under a process of mere natural selection, under the more discriminating process of rational selection acquire survival value. Generosity and courtesy, while in their broader forms they may have had value for purely physical survival, certainly in their more delicate and finer forms never would have been selected by a natural process of brute struggle. It is because they are elements in the *higher* life and not merely elements of life that they have been chosen.

Mr. Huxley is right, therefore, in emphasizing the contrast between the natural and the moral process. Moral evolution is a struggle for the control and overthrow of nature, for the establishment of a kingdom whose laws are other than those observed by nature. The world process has produced a conscious intelligence, and this conscious intelligence is aspiring to control the process of its own production. Nature has become self-conscious, and has thereby ceased to be merely natural. Man is getting one foot in the stirrup and it remains to be seen how and where he will ride. But he is bound to ride somewhere whether it be to salvation or destruction, for he is no longer content to be led blindly to his fate. This seems to me the meaning of the modern questioning of tradition and convention—the ceaseless inquiry into the nature of man and society, the development of science and, above all, the beginnings of the application of science to the control of life. The development of knowledge is to be applied to the development of life, and the materials of nature are to be used in the realization of ideals which, but for conscious choice, would have no meaning.

A word as to the mode of transmission in moral evolu-

tion, for this, too, differs radically from that in organic evolution. Physical evolution is necessarily slow because the acquired characters of individuals are not readily transmissible to descendants, but in social life the achievements of one age are handed down to the next by social tradition. The new ideas of to-day may be the accepted commonplaces of to-morrow through the miracle of the printing press and the school. Our libraries are the incarnations of our ideas which through them acquire the chance to live beyond the limits of our own lives. Social supplants almost exclusively physical heredity.

IV. What is the ethical significance of the idea of evolution?

This brings us to the final phase of our problem and we have to ask of what value to ethics has the idea of evolution been? That value has been, in general, of the same kind as in the other sciences, though, as we shall see, less in degree. It has consisted in the exposition of the unity and continuity of life in all its forms. The present has, on the one hand, been shown as continuous with the past; and, on the other, organic life has been shown as in close and vital relation with its environment. Interconnection, successive and simultaneous, is involved in the idea of evolution.

With more special reference to ethics we find: (1) That the various traits of the moral life are now regarded as adaptations to the conditions of life, instead of as arbitrary elements in a fixed character. Courage and temperance and justice assume their forms in relation to certain needs, and their value is not determinable apart from these needs. Our moral judgments must include not only the agent but the situation, and a virtue out of place is not a virtue.

(2) Not only are the virtues such only in relation to the environment, but they must also be considered in relation to one another. Evolution has emphasized the conception of the moral life as an organism in which the virtues are not isolated but are only the various functions

of a single life which is more important than any of its members. This idea of the moral life as organic is, of course, not an original contribution to ethics by the theory of evolution; it is as old as the Greeks, but it has been newly emphasized and realized in the light of recent science.

(3) The moral life has been seen in its relation to its physical conditions. This is only a special instance of the former influence. Spirituality is now called sentimentality if it ignores the fundamental instincts of the body. It is true enough that now, as ever, we may be called to throw away the physical life for the sake of a larger good; but now, as never before perhaps, we are called upon to make sure that it is a larger good for which the life is lost. Flesh and blood are coming to their own again as we recognize our kinship with the animal. It may well be that flesh and blood are encroaching beyond their boundaries under this new favor, but that nature has regained her place again we should be thankful. In this again, however, the theory of evolution has but recalled us to the naturalism of the Greeks. It has given a certain biological basis for that which the healthy instincts of the Greeks had uncritically believed.

(4) The absolutist conscience has been eliminated by evolution. Our moral judgments are no longer trusted as absolute revelations of truth irrespective of criticism. The influence of time, place and circumstance is too plainly traceable in them to be ignored. Under the guidance of the idea of evolution research into the history of morals has shown us plainly the inconsistency of our concrete judgments. Not that conscience has been exposed or invalidated, but that its deliverances are always for the particular situation and are not of oracular or universal import. It cannot be understood apart from its historical situation.

These four things, then, the theory of evolution has done for ethics. They constitute its contribution toward the history of morals, in consequence of which we have

come to consider moral conduct as part of conduct in general, and conduct in general as one term in the larger relationship of life and environment.

But the science of ethics is not primarily and essentially interested in the history of morals as a mere record of what has been without reference to its value. It is not a special branch of history, nor is it identical with sociology, however closely related it may be in subject-matter. Its purpose and point of view are fundamentally distinct. Its main interest is not in the discovery of what men have done in the past nor even in the motives which have induced them so to act. Rather it is the problem of the nature and validity of the standards men have used to which ethics addresses itself. It seeks to determine the worth of ideals and not their history; to render consistent our judgments of what is good or bad, and not to explain how we come to have such judgments. And hence if the theory of evolution is limited to this matter of historic development and can throw no light upon the value of our ideals, it must be of minor importance in ethics.

That the theory of evolution should hold such a minor position in ethics, however, its official expounders by no means believe. If it is good for anything it is good for everything, is the maxim of some. If it has explained how men have come to hold certain beliefs, it can also explain whether they ought to continue to hold them. The explanation of the fact is the explanation of its value.

We have not time to discuss in detail the ways in which the idea of evolution has been applied to the solution of this central ethical problem; mention must suffice.

(1) It has been denied that there *is* any real problem of what we *ought* to do apart from what we *do* and *must* do. The last word of science is its statement of an absolutely necessary order of the world in which the individual is only a product of forces beyond his control. To speak of what he ought to do apart from what he does do is like speaking of what the stone ought to do when it

is dropped from the hand. This denial of the problem is an easy, but correspondingly cheap, method of its disposition. It is due to the limitation of view which can see but one aspect of life, its physical, and therefore denies the possibility of others. It is as childlike as the savage's interpretation of nature in terms of his own familiar, capricious spirit.

(2) Those who admit that there really is such a problem as that of the *ought* in moral life, differ somewhat in their views as to how the idea of evolution helps solve this problem. It may be said, for instance, that the better life is the more evolved life, and that the more evolved life is the more complex life, evolution being the progress from the simpler to the more complex. The ideal, therefore, should be such increase in complexity as is equivalent to higher development. Not to mention the horror with which such an ideal must be received by the prophets of the simpler life to-day, one may very reasonably ask why the more complex forms of life are any better than the simpler forms. Even grant that the actual process of life seems to develop such complexity, we have yet to ask whether such development is worth while. Complexity as such seems a perfectly colorless idea, or even an exasperating one. Our question is still, what is the complexity good for? does it serve a useful end? Mere complexity only renders a machine more liable to dislocation and disruption. Unless our finely organized nervous system produces results other than its own complexity, it were better to remain a clam.

(3) Accordingly, then, this increased complexity may be held to be valuable as resulting in better adaptation to environment. Our delicate organization is justified in evolutionary terms because it is a wonderful tool in producing adjustment. The better life is the more evolved life, and the more evolved life is the one better adapted to its environment. We *ought* to seek such adaptation as the supreme good of life.

Yet this does not seem quite satisfactory. Judging by

results in survival, one can hardly say that civilized and moralized man is much better adjusted to his environment than is his more unevolved brother. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away;" whereas the lusty whale flounders about in his element for hundreds of years. It is true that when he comes in contact with man his strength also is cut off and he is towed away; his human environment is too much for him, he cannot adapt himself. But it is also a question whether, indeed, man will be able to adjust himself to the civilization he has himself made.

But the inadequacy of adjustment to environment as the standard of conduct becomes evident enough if we remember that such adjustment itself involves a standard if it is to mean anything distinctive. If adjustment means only the actual relations existing between organism and environment, then everything is adjusted to everything else, and poison as well as pie furthers such adjustment. To give the phrase meaning we must ask, adjustment for what end? And then we are forced to the conception of certain ideal relations in which organism and environment are thought to stand. We never ask merely, are we adjusted to our environment, but do we and our environment together constitute a desirable situation. The question is not, am I adjusted to the unsanitary or corrupt physical and social conditions in which I live? but, is the total situation what it should be? How can we better both ourselves and our surroundings so that ideal relations may exist? Adjustment to environment is good only if the environment is itself good as tested by some standard other than itself.

(4) Is that standard, then, to be found in life itself? Is conduct morally better in so far as it conduces to the development of life through the adjustment of the relations between the individual and his environment? This sounds a little more promising, for life seems to involve

a certain value and to lend itself for use as a standard. But are we really out of our difficulties? Or have we merely turned up at our starting point again, having completed the cycle of possibilities? Our problem was as to the better life. This we found to be, not the more complex life, nor the more adjusted life, but now the more developed life. And we have not yet found a test for this development. Mere physical persistence and power in and by itself is not identical with what we mean by the best life. Physical life is itself only part of that larger system of things which man calls good. It is indeed the condition for the development of social, esthetic and moral goods, but these are other than and more than it. Men have not hesitated to count their lives not worthy of comparison with these more ideal interests. If actions are to be counted good because they tend toward the development of life, the measure, then, of this life is not to be taken in physical terms alone. And if this is so, it seems to mean that we have no quantitatively exact standard of goodness, and that the idea of evolution has not been of much service in this respect.

(5) There is, finally, just one other attempt to solve the ethical problem by evolutionary means which it is worth while to note. Mr. Spencer thought he had found a definite standard in biological evolution by which the value of life might be measured. We have found his discovery worthless. Leslie Stephen and S. Alexander recognize this failure and propose a modified theory. There is no definite end in the evolutionary process, and therefore no fixed standard by which to measure the worth of conduct. What we find is that life tends always toward a certain adjustment with its environment, or toward a relatively stable equilibrium. The maintenance of this temporary equilibrium is the end of moral conduct. The equilibrium is upset from time to time by changes in its elements, but there is a constant tendency toward it again. Conduct which eliminates friction, which works easily, which promotes the social health, is good conduct. Just

what kind of conduct *will* work we cannot tell till we try. Life is a continual experiment with ideas and institutions in which the useful survive and become rules of action. A rule of action is thus justified by its very survival, which is only possible if it is a rule which works for the social health. The survival of the fittest in the struggle of ideas is the survival of the best, since the best is only the efficient. If political equality actually survives its struggle for existence, its ability to survive will constitute its moral value. Nothing succeeds like success. The real is the rational. Might makes right.

This sounds hopeful—almost common sense. It is encouraging to think that the cosmic process itself is going to determine what is right, that the mills of the gods, though grinding slow, will grind exceeding small and fine. The only trouble is that we cannot wait for the grist these mills will grind. Our scientific faith that only the useful and therefore the good can survive in the long run, is beautiful indeed, but meanwhile we want to know what to do about things now. Our faith that if woman suffrage is useful it will surely come, can hardly help us much when we want to know whether we should join the political equality club or not. It would rather suggest that we get out of the way and wait till the matter has decided itself. And if we all pursued this eminently sane and scientific method, what would become of woman suffrage, or of any other cause which demands present action, and in the decision of which we ourselves are factors?

The difficulty with the method is that it fails to realize the nature of moral judgment and moral evolution. It assumes that moral development takes place automatically or mechanically without reference to the judgment of the individual, who may be left out of account in considering the results. On the contrary, however, moral evolution we have found to be a process of rational selection in which the individual is a conscious factor. We ourselves are deciding what the outcome of the process is to be, and hence we cannot use the idea of that outcome to

determine what we shall decide. One might as well tell a man he ought to walk in the way his legs carry him when he is really trying to decide which way his legs ought to carry him. It is silly to say that the survival of the fittest is to be our standard of conduct, when the real problem is as to what we mean by the fittest.

In this point lies the essential weakness of all naturalistic theories of evolution as attempted explanations of the value of conduct. They attempt to play "Hamlet" with Hamlet left out. They assume that distinctions of right and wrong can be fixed by an evolutionary process quite independently of our conscious judgments as to these things. Evolution is personified, objectified, as if it were itself a power which did things rather than a character of processes upon which it is absolutely dependent. Our moral standards are not produced for us by any such imaginary power independent of us. We cannot sit back in our armchairs and comfortably watch the evolution of moral ideals, waiting for that one to appear which bears the label stamped with the approval of the evolutionary union; upon the appearance of which we are to seize and apply it to the regulation of our lives. On the contrary, it is our faith in our own ideals that forbids this armchair attitude toward social progress, and sends us out into the midst of life to determine what the course of its evolution is to be. We and our ideals are factors, not merely products, of evolution. The term moral evolution is only a name for a certain continuous progress made through the efforts of rational men and women in working out their ideals of life, and therefore presupposes such ideals. So far, then, is evolution from being the explanation of our moral judgments, that, on the contrary, our moral judgments are the explanation of evolution.

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